

AMENDING THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE ACT

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3858, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3858) to amend the Public Health Service Act to increase the supply of pancreatic islet cells for research, and to provide for better coordination of Federal efforts and information on islet cell transplantation.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 3858) was read the third time and passed.

VETERANS' BENEFITS IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2004

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 706, S. 2486, the veterans' non-health care benefits bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2486) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and enhance education, housing, employment, medical, and other benefits for veterans and to improve and extend certain authorities relating to the administration of benefits for veterans, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

(Strike the part shown in black brackets and insert the part shown in italic.)

S. 2486

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

[SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.]

[(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 2004".]

[(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

[Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.]

Sec. 2. References to title 38, United States Code.

[TITLE I—EDUCATION BENEFITS]

[Sec. 101. Increase in maximum amount of contribution for increased amount of basic educational assistance under Montgomery GI Bill.

[Sec. 102. Pilot program on additional two-year period for use of entitlement by participants in Montgomery GI Bill for vocational or job readiness training.

[Sec. 103. Exclusion of veterans education benefits in determination of eligibility or amount of Federal educational grants and loans.

[Sec. 104. Collection of contributions for educational assistance under Montgomery GI Bill from Reserves called to active duty.

[TITLE II—HOUSING BENEFITS]

[Sec. 201. Increase in maximum amount of housing loan guarantee.

[Sec. 202. Permanent authority for guarantee of adjustable rate mortgages.

[Sec. 203. Permanent authority for guarantee of hybrid adjustable rate mortgages and modification of guarantee authority.

[Sec. 204. Termination of collection of loan fees from veterans rated eligible for compensation at pre-discharge rating examinations.

[TITLE III—OTHER BENEFITS AND BENEFITS MATTERS]

[Subtitle A—Employment Benefits]

[Sec. 301. Availability of administrative and judicial redress for certain veterans denied opportunity to compete for Federal employment.

[Subtitle B—Medical Benefits]

[Sec. 311. Prohibition on collection of copayments for hospice care.

[Subtitle C—Extension of Benefits and Related Authorities]

[Sec. 321. Extension of various authorities relating to benefits for veterans.

[Subtitle D—Other Matters]

[Sec. 331. Modification of definition of minority group member for purposes of Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

[SEC. 2. REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.]

[Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.]

[TITLE I—EDUCATION BENEFITS]

[SEC. 101. INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION FOR INCREASED AMOUNT OF BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER MONTGOMERY GI BILL.

[(a) ACTIVE DUTY BENEFIT.—Section 3011(e)(3) is amended by striking "\$600" and inserting "\$2,000".]

[(b) SELECTED RESERVE BENEFIT.—Section 3012(f)(3) is amended by striking "\$600" and inserting "\$2,000".]

[SEC. 102. PILOT PROGRAM ON ADDITIONAL TWO-YEAR PERIOD FOR USE OF ENTITLEMENT BY PARTICIPANTS IN MONTGOMERY GI BILL FOR VOCATIONAL OR JOB READINESS TRAINING.

[(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) Subchapter I of chapter 30 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

["§ 3020A. Additional two-year period for use of entitlement for vocational or job readiness instruction or training; pilot program

["(a) PILOT PROGRAM REQUIRED.—(1) The Secretary shall carry out a pilot program to

assess the feasibility and advisability of permitting individuals whose entitlement to basic educational assistance under this chapter expires under section 3031 of this title before their complete use of such entitlement to be entitled to an additional two-year period for their use of such entitlement.

["(2) The pilot program shall commence six months after the date of the enactment of this section, and shall terminate four years after the date of the commencement of the pilot program.

["(b) ADDITIONAL TWO-YEAR PERIOD OF ENTITLEMENT.—Notwithstanding any provision of section 3031 of this title, an individual described in subsection (c) shall, at the expiration of the 10-year period beginning on the educational assistance entitlement commencement date of such individual, be entitled to an additional two-year period for the use of entitlement to basic educational assistance under this chapter.

["(c) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—(1) An individual described in this subsection is any individual who—

["(A) as of the end of the 10-year period beginning on the educational assistance entitlement commencement date of such individual—

["(i) would remain entitled to basic educational assistance under this chapter but for the expiration of the 10-year delimiting period applicable to such individual under section 3031 of this title; and

["(ii) has not utilized all of the entitlement of such individual to basic educational assistance under this chapter; and

["(B) at the time of the application for entitlement under this subsection (d), is accepted, enrolled, or otherwise participating (as determined by the Secretary) in instruction or training described in subsection (e).

["(2) This subsection does not apply to an individual otherwise described by paragraph (1) whose remaining entitlement to basic educational assistance under this chapter as described in subparagraph (A)(ii) of that paragraph is based on the transfer of basic educational assistance under section 3020 of this title.

["(d) APPLICATION.—(1) An individual seeking an additional two-year period for the use of entitlement under this section shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor containing such information as the Secretary may require for purposes of this section.

["(2) The Secretary may not receive applications under this subsection after the termination date of the pilot program under subsection (a)(2).

["(e) COMMENCEMENT OF ADDITIONAL PERIOD FOR USE.—The additional two-year period for the use of entitlement by an individual under this section shall commence on the date the application of the individual under subsection (d) is received by the Secretary if the Secretary determines pursuant to a review of the application that the individual is an individual described by subsection (c) for purposes of this section.

["(f) INSTRUCTION OR TRAINING COVERED BY ADDITIONAL PERIOD FOR USE.—(1) The instruction or training for which entitlement to basic educational assistance under this